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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0736

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1439

RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 0423

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2205

RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2535

RUEAAIA/CIA WASHDC

RHEFAAA/DIA WASHDC

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SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/PPD, SCA/CEN, R, ECA/A/L

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TAGS: PREL OEXC SCUL KPAO KZ

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: THEY AREN'T READING WHAT WE'RE READING

REF: (A) DUSHANBE 0225

(B) ASTANA 0280

(C) TASHKENT 0221

(D) ASHGABAT 0303

¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

¶2. (U) SUMMARY: Kazakhstan is highly oriented toward the Russian language. Much of its media are available only in Russian and come from Russia. Thus, the vast majority of Kazakhstani citizens get their world view from Russia. English-language programs greatly help counteract this imbalance of information. Competent village English teachers are in short supply; as in Tajikistan (ref A), the best Kazakhstani teachers leave the profession for better paying non-teaching jobs in the cities. By providing professional development opportunities and support for English teachers across Kazakhstan, the U.S. government could encourage local teachers to stay in education. Kazakhstan is the size of Western Europe; post needs significantly more resources if it wants to influence the language in which people are obtaining their information. END SUMMARY.

RUSSIAN LANGUAGE/RUSSIAN PRODUCTIONS

¶3. (SBU) Access to English-language resources is extremely limited in Kazakhstan. Even in Astana and Almaty, the country's capital and its major business and culture center, it is difficult to find bookstores that sell English-language books. Radio stations do not play English-language music, television stations do not broadcast English-language programs, and movie theaters do not screen American movies in the original language. The vast majority of what Kazakhstanis read, watch, and listen to comes from Russia and is in the Russian language. For example, RELO (Regional English Language Officer) spoke to a local high school English class shortly after the 9/11 anniversary last fall. Almost all the students were convinced that, based on a Russian-language, Russian-produced Discovery Channel episode, the United States had purposely bombed itself on 9/11. Kazakhstan, along with other countries in the region (ref D), is not watching what we're watching. Both teachers and students need greater access to information in English; when asked if the students use the Internet, they all raised their hands. When asked if they used the Internet in English, nobody raised a hand.

ENGLISH IS THE DOOR TO THE FUTURE

¶14. (SBU) As the Ambassador put it in recent remarks, "President Nazarbayev has said repeatedly in public that Kazakhstan has three language priorities: Kazakh as the national language, Russian as the lingua franca of the region, and English as the global language and language of the future. Kazakhstan is a country that is progressive and developing and internationalizing quickly. English teaching is one of our most cost-effective ways for communicating and spreading Western values and standards, because with language comes cultural education. It is not just an academic pursuit. It's the door to the future and to increasingly harmonious relations between Kazakhstan and the United States." Unfortunately, teaching English appears to be an unfunded, unplanned Kazakhstani government mandate: RELO recently received a fax from the mayor of Karaganda, one of Kazakhstan's major cities, asking for 40 native-speaker English teachers to be sent immediately.

ENGLISH-LANGUAGE FELLOWS AND SPECIALISTS: BRINGING AMERICA TO TOWNS AND VILLAGES

¶15. (U) There are many colleges and universities across Kazakhstan that would be eager to host an American English professor for an academic year. Ten to 15 Fellows spread across Kazakhstan would make a huge impact. This is true for all Central Asian countries (refs B, C). Fellows do more than teach English; they bring the best of America to remote locales, providing a cultural and linguistic window to the outside world. The Fellows program is an established, tested program that works. Increasing funding levels for the English Language Specialist program is another programming option. Bringing in teaching experts for two to six weeks to carry out

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teacher-training programs across Kazakhstan would be very useful for English teachers in remote, often forgotten towns and villages.

ENGLISH ACCESS MICROSCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM: ACCESS TO INFORMATION

¶16. (U) The English Access Microscholarship program is extremely popular and cost-effective. Roughly \$1000 per person provides young, underprivileged Kazakhstani citizens with English training and exposure to American culture for two years, creating pockets of good will and giving young people access to a wide variety of information resources. Currently, we have one program in the southern city of Shymkent and two in the north, in Pavlodar and in Pervomayskiy, a village outside Ust-Kamenogorsk. An additional \$250,000 for Kazakhstan's English Access Microscholarship programs could provide much-needed English training across this vast country.

GETTING OUT OF THE CITIES AND INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE

¶17. (U) In Astana, PAS currently hosts a monthly Friday film night, a weekly English-language discussion group in the Embassy's Information Resource Center, and a monthly outreach program where Emboffs speak to high school English classes on a variety of topics. Another weekly English club led by a native speaker is held at Astana's EducationUSA center. The Branch Public Affairs Section in Almaty hosts American Crossroads, a bi-weekly English discussion club. At the eight American Corners across Kazakhstan, Peace Corps volunteers host English language clubs on a regular basis. E-Teacher, a program that offers Kazakhstani English teachers American college-level distance learning opportunities, is always oversubscribed. Nevertheless, demand for native English speakers far outstrips the supply. The Embassy has recently received requests from four separate universities in Astana alone who would all like a native speaker to meet with their students on a weekly basis. In order to meet these needs and get out of the major cities, a substantial, sustained increase of funding for all English language programs, including an increase in associated monitoring costs, is needed to reach out to Kazakhstan's students and teachers. We all need to be reading the same things, or at least have the option to do so.

HOAGLAND